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ABSTRACT

The social work profession endows individual social workers with the mandate to respect and use the democratic processes to help clients achieve their fullest potential as individuals. This study was undertaken to understand and analyze if and how this mandate has been affected by the prescriptive social and political values of the New Right fundamentalists. A survey questionnaire was mailed to random national sample (N=1250) selected from the membership of the National Association of Social Workers. The questionnaire was designed to measure opinions on a variety of social issues which have been emphasized by New Right fundamentalists. Also measured were items such as the extent of pressure from New Right fundamentalists, problems related to religious differences, the desirability of encouraging religiosity among clients, and whether religious belief is a prerequisite for conscientious professional behavior. The findings suggested that most professional social workers in the United States have not had significant conflicts or pressure related to fundamentalism or to differences in religious beliefs. However, a substantial minority (one out of eight) social work professionals have had pressure from fundamentalists and/or problems related to religious beliefs. The work of educators committed to transmitting basic values to future practitioners could be affected by New Right fundamentalists and those in sympathy with them. The study instrument giving raw frequencies and a list of comments by respondents are appended. (SM)

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A National Empirical Analysis of the Attitudes of U.S. Professional Educators on New Right Political and Religious Issues

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Howard V. Epstein

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The New Right is a political entity which has made its conservative views highly visible in the 1980s. As a political force, the New Right has attempted to influence those services which are the responsibility of local, state, and federal governments. It is using a variety of approaches to influence public service. Fundamentalist groups have united to support and elect candidates to local, state, and federal political offices. New Right groups lobby vigorously in state legislatures and in the national Congress. Pressure is applied to local officials to support New Right points of view.

One of the most familiar examples of pressure to local officials has been in the field of education, where ultraconservatives throughout the country have attempted to control the content of curriculum in public schools. The New Right has been visible and vocal in Board of Education meetings and administrative offices, demanding that "scientific creationism" have equal time with evolution, that sex education and values education be eliminated from school curricula, and that books reflecting a non-fundamentalist point of view be removed from school media centers. Their efforts have met with varying degrees of success.

The experiences of local boards of education with the New Right have implications for other public services. The investigation reported here was undertaken to look at the impact of New Right Fundamentalism upon the social work profession. This profession has had an historical commitment to human dignity and belief in individual self-determination. Social work's goals of "...a humanistic and egalitarian society..." (Macht & Quam, 1986, p.7) appear to conflict with the goals of the New Right movement, a movement that has been described as:

> ...the network of activists, organizations, and constituencies that have been the most militant opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment, the Panama Canal Treaty, Salt II, affirmative action, federal social programs and government regulation of business; the most vocal critics of liberalism and secular humanism; and the most ardent proponents of the Human Life Amendment, the Family Protection Act, increased defense spending, prayer in schools, and the teaching of scientific creationism (Himmelstein, 1983, p.13).

Social work by design endows individual professionals with the mandate to respect and use the processes identified with democracy. This study was designed to understand and analyze if and how this mandate has been affected by the prescriptive social and political values of the New Right Fundamentalists. Thoughts and feelings about this issue have been gathered from a national sample of professional social workers, ever mindful that social work owes much of its character to values historically subsumed by traditions of various religious groups (Brackney, 1979; Niebuhr 1932; Spencer, 1959). Over time these religious influences have been modified, resulting in a profession with a more inclusive set of professional values. "Social work has become a secular and knowledge-based profession. It was a critical step in the history when it discovered its difference from an exclusive and limited reliance on the volunteer and an equally exclusive identification of its praxis with social movements" (Constable, p.31). Social work moved away from the characteristic religious nature of its roots, but belief and commitment to individualism and the common welfare remain (Constable, 1983; Kohs, 1066).

> Historically, professionalism was at first coexistent with the church. As religion lost its central dominance, the professions became secularized and then organized separately. To profess originally meant to take vows of a religious order, but by the seventeenth century it was secularized to mean that which professes to be duly qualified: professional" (Danzig, pp. 41-42).

The researchers conducting this study acknowledge the historical influences of religion on social work, but want to address a contemporary question in keeping with the status of a profession: Does the pervasive influence of an orthodox conservative religious ethic influence social work practice and social work education? The answers, tentative though they may be, are based upon responses from professional social workers throughout the United States--social workers from urban and rural communities; social workers who are religious and irreligious; churched and unchurched; social workers teaching and practicing in institutions under public, private, sectarian and nonsectarian sponsorship.

Social Work

"Social work is by its very nature a normative profession with a code of ethics that prescribes the behavior of those that practice within the profession" (Abramson, 1982, p.19). The most constant principle of social work may be in the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers: "The social worker should make every effort to foster maximum self-determination on the part of the clients" (NASW, 1956). Social work traditionally has maintained a commitment to the rights and needs of all individuals, of all groups. The critical emphasis in social work has been on the right to self-determination, equity, justice, entitlements, fairness and impartiality and those needs concerned with healing, alleviation of suffering and inadequacy of care (Abramson, 1982).

Whether the focus be on social justice or social health, social workers translated this value system into a code of ethical principles which

emphasize those obligations and duties which dignify the individual, the family, and society. This inherent ethical foundation for social work is the continuing belief in client self-determination. "Whether and how (can) personal and professional values come together in the individual social work practitioner; that is, can they be integrated on a level that goes beyond the oppositional phase wherein personal values stand versus professional values" Danzig, 1985,, p.41).

Values of social work, practice or education, transcend the individual professional to include clients or students. It is crucial for the professional social worker to consider any discrepancies between personal and professional values (Levy, 1976).

> Inevitably, though, this task of striving toward the integration of one's religious values and one's theory of practice raises many struggles and questions for the religiously committed social worker as to how to heighten his religious commitment and yet negotiate the problems he faces with the new culture of his profession. In response to challenges posed by a perceived lack of compatibility and consonance between religious and professional values, the religiously committed social worker develops strategies for conflict negotiation (Danzig, 1985, p.46).

For the social worker, educator or practitioner, religious or irreligious, the fact remains that the essential principle of the profession is concerned with a democratic life for all, which translates into the fact that no influence or intervention or persuasion should be based on personal, cultural, or religious bias. Since the early part of the 20th century "social workers came to realize that one should not 'buy' a client's compliance with a standard of conduct by use of such devices as financial aid or personal approbation" (Spencer, 1959, p.16). In the 1930s social workers

reacted to the blatant economic deprivation of the Great Depression by placing guilt on the economy and public officials, not on individuals. Social work marked the decades of the 20s and 30s with a strong fear of superimposing the values of the worker or educator on the client or student. Between the two World Wars a prevailing cynicism and the influence of psychoanalytic thought diminished confidence in the values of organized religion which had so prominently embroidered the fabric of social work education and practice. By the end of World War II social work had established its own identity as a profession. Since the 40s social work has recognized and appreciated the fact that the worker's own values play an important role in professional decision-making.

Conservative Ethic

Contemporary society has been buffeted by a pervasive conservatism which has infiltrated major social institutions and overwhelmingly influenced key social issues: attitudes toward family; sexuality; the role of women; economic conservatism and resistance to governmental intervention; political isolation; support for a strong military; law and order; and hostility to or suspicion of outsiders (Reed, 1983). This permeating ethic of conservatism has played host to continuing generations of groups now termed "the New Right." From these religious-political groups have come a vigorous conservatism which in the 80s has given the appearance of being alive and well and thriving throughout the nation. The New Right has been characterized as both new and old. It is old in that it has adopted themes from American conservatism which traditionally have been part of American

culture. It is new in that it has adopted new organizational strategies that reflect the contemporary American political scene (Himmelstein, 1983).

Fundamentalism derives its name from The Fundamentals, twelve paperback books written from 1910 to 1915 by conservative American and British writers as an attack upon religious modernism. Although characterized as "fissiparous," fundamentalists are unified in their rejection of any doctrine or practice which might be termed liberal or modern (Neuhaus, 1985). The essential characteristic of "fundamentalism is the acceptance of the literal truth of the basic or fundamental documents of the religion" (Siegal, 1983, p.152). "Fundamentalism (is) a religious movement (which) emerged as the result of the impact of secularization upon religious culture: that is, in the confrontation between the affirmation of the absolute authority of religious tradition and the critical self-reflection of modern thought" (Schwartz and McBride, 1983, p.128). Fundamentalism is the union of social and political reaction (which resulted in) the emergence of a religious style shaped by a desire to strike back at everything modern--the higher criticism, evolutionism, the social gospel, rational criticism of any kind" (Hofstadter, 1983, p.123).

Religious fundamentalism is both a Christian and a non-Christian phenomenon although currently Christian fundamentalist groups dominate. Jewish and Christian fundamentalists share a belief in a rigid and unshakable body politic that is ideological, not pragmatic. Jewish fundamentalists assert that biblical and rabbinical traditions are divinely inspired and dictate that there can be no change from traditional life patterns (Siegal, 1983). Christian fundamentalism is based on 6 fundamental beliefs: "the

inerrancy of the Scripture (the Bible contains no errors in any subject on which it speaks); the virgin birth of Jesus (the spirit of God conceived Jesus without human intervention); the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ (on the cross he bore the just punishment for the sins of the entire world); his bodily resurrection; the authenticity of the biblical miracles; and premillienarianism" (Neuhaus, 1985, p.44).

Christian fundamentalism has been reinforced by a coalition of evangelical Protestants who militantly opposed any theological modernism or the secularism of the general culture. The power of fundamentalism may be in that is accepted as an authentic conservative tradition with deep ideological roots (Marsden, 1983: Sandeen, 1978).

> The fundamentalism... we are now looking at is distinctively political fundamentalism...based on a politically activist tradition inherent from Puritanism with an early 19th century evangelical outlook. Central to understanding the current fundamentalist alarm...is to realize that they take absolutely literally and seriously the idea that America will be blessed or cursed according to how well she keeps God's law. The moral issues accordingly are exceedingly practical ones. The success or failure of America depends directly on whether it perceives this moral heritage. Judging by this standard, fundamentalists are understandably alarmed at the moral direction of the nation. To them the open flaunting of God's laws in the open championing of things like abortion, pornography, and homosexuality are sure signs that our nation is on the brink of God's judgment and destruction (Marsden, 1983, pp, 72-73).

In contrast to the values and doctrines of the New Right Fundamentalists, social work values call for behaviors which inculcate a centrality of human values:

1) Encourage self-direction and self-determination.

2) Begin where the individual, group, or community is.

3) Deal with the whole person--feelings, hopes, and experiences.

4) Respect individual differences--essential human diversity.

5) Acknowledge that the welfare of all is interwoven. (Cohen, 1958).

As the last 13 years of the 20th century emerge, what effect will New Right Fundamentalism have had on professional social work? Answers to this question may indeed be indicators of the degree and nature of influence of a pervasive social and political conservatism in this decade of the 1980s. Social work, a profession which has had an historical commitment to human dignity and belief in individual self-determination, may once again find itself in a milieu inundated with executive mandates, judicial judgments and legislative actions which prescribe both public and personal behaviors. In an era when constitutional traditions separating church and state appear less than separate it is appropriate if not necessary to examine if social work has the capacity to attain "the profession's goals of a humanistic and egalitarian society" (Macht & Quam, 1986, p.7).

Methods and Data Source

The primary empirical source for this paper was a nationwide survey in which 1,250 members of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), selected at random from the 98,000 NASW members, were mailed a questionnaire designed to measure opinion on a variety of issues which have been emphasized by New Right fundamentalists (including abortion, birth control information for minors, women's rights and roles, prayer in school, homosexuality, and the necessity for respect for religious differences). (A copy of the questionnaire, with the raw frequencies of responses shown, is

included as Appendix A.) The extent of pressure from New Right fundamentalists, problems related to religious differences, the desirability of encouraging religiosity among clients, whether religious belief is a prerequisite for conscientious professional behavior, and a number of demographic variables (including age, sex, race/ethnic group, income, religious preference, religiosity, membership in religious organizations, political orientation, and type of employer) were also measured. The National Association of Social Workers was chosen for this study because it is a clear example of a national organization to which both professional educators and professional practitioners are likely to belong, and because social work values are potentially so completely at odds with those of the New Right.

A variety of univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses have been applied to the results to develop as full an understanding of the issues as possible. The results, based on returns from 934 NASW members (75% of the sample), were analyzed for differences among professional occupational groups (social work educators, social work practitioners and social work administrators), using both analysis of variance and discriminant analysis. An index of support for New Right Fundamentalist positions, based on responses to a number of Likert items, was computed with differences on this index by occupational group examined with analysis of variance.

Results

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in many ways, but the educators were different in some respects. Since the terms "educators," "administrators," and "practitioners" will be used throughout this paper, clarification of the terms is needed. Classification into these three groups is based on responses to an item asking "which of the following best describes your current (or if retired/unemployed, most recent) primary position?" The four response choices, with the number choosing each, were "Social Work Practitioner" (411), "Social Work Administrator" (359), "Social Work Educator" (110), and "Other" or missing (54). The first category, designated hereafter as practitioners includes 111 social workers who indicated on a subsequent item that they are in "private practice."

The educators were more likely to have higher levels of formal education (34% with doctorates), of course, although both practitioners (7% with doctorates) and administrators (5% with doctorates) were also highly educated. About 97% of the respondents, including all categories, reported holding at least a master's degree. Overall, 59% of the respondents were female, with only 48% females among administrators, 56% females among educators, and 70% among practitioners. The group may well be somewhat unrepresentative of social workers in terms of age and experience--members of NASW, including these respondents, are probably older and more experienced. Forty-two percent of all respondents were "60 or older," with 75% reporting over 20 years in professional social work. Both educators and administrators had at least slightly higher percentages in the top age and experience categories, than did practitioners as would probably be expected.

Most respondents (57%) are members of organized religious bodies. The data shown in Tables 1 and 2, below, suggest a mostly Protestant group, with most declaring religion to be an important part of their lives.

Table 1

General Religious Orientation

Religion	Frequency	Percent
Catholic	120	13
Jewish	193	21
Protestant	429	46
Agnostic or Atheist	120	13
Others or missing	72	8
Total	934	101*

Table 2

Importance of Religious (or Nonreligious) Status

Descriptive Label	Frequency	Percent
"Central to my life and philosophy"	269	29
"One of several most important..."	229	25
"Important, but less than..."	206	22
"Fairly unimportant in my life..."	164	18
"Of no importance to me..."	52	6
(Missing cases)	14	1
Total	934	101*

*Percentages do not total 100 because of rounding error.

The results from Tables 1 and 2 can be a bit misleading when one considers that a few who indicated their status was important to them were atheists or agnostics, and a few others specified a religious category but then went on to assign little or no importance to that status. To clarify these matters a religiosity score was assigned to each respondent by scoring the categories from Table 2 from zero ("no importance") up to four ("central") and then reversing the sign for any who identified themselves as agnostics or atheists. The number of respondents with each of the resulting scores is shown in Table 3, below (potential range of religiosity scores is from -4 to +4). As is clear from Table 3, most (72%) of the respondents indicate both that they are religious and that that status is at least somewhat important to them.

Table 3

Religiosity Scores (See text for explanation)

Score	Frequency	Percent
+4	263	28
+3	218	23
+2	184	20
+1	113	12
0	52	6
-1	51	5
-2	20	2
-3	10	1
-4	6	1
(Missing cases)	17	2
Total	934	100

Religious preference and degree of religiosity varied somewhat among the three occupational groups, with the most surprising differences being in religiosity. A plurality of respondents indicated that they are Protestants (see Table 1), and this was true for all three subgroups (educators, administrators, practitioners), with Jewish being the second highest percentage in all three subgroups. The most noticeable differences in religiosity scores occurred in terms of the proportion of each group who could be considered nonreligious (atheists, agnostics, and any who indicated that their religious status is "of no importance"--that is, those who scored zero or a negative number). For educators the percentage of such nonreligious respondents was 15%; perhaps not surprisingly, for administrators this percentage was lower--only 10%; somewhat more surprisingly, 19% of the practitioners were nonreligious.

For the purposes of discussion of the Likert format items, the two different "agree" categories are collapsed together, as are the two "disagree" categories. Distinctions between agree/disagree and the more intense categories were retained when computing measures of association.

Responses to Likert format items #6 and #17, the key measures of the dependent variable (extent of effect on social work of religious/political beliefs of the New Right), suggest that most professional social workers in the U.S. have not had significant conflicts or pressure related to fundamentalism or to differences in religious beliefs. However, a substantial minority of about one out of eight social work professionals, varying somewhat in subpopulations, have had pressure from fundamentalists and/or problems related to religious beliefs.

More specifically with respect to item #17, 13% of the whole sample agreed that they had "had problems with clients which were related to differences in religious belief between me and the client." When the sample is divided by position, some differences are present (15% of practitioners agreed, while 11% of the educators and 12% of the administrators agreed--not significantly different with alpha = .05). Slightly varying percentages of people with problems related to religious differences did occur for those of various religious orientations, though the differences were also not statistically significant.

On item #6, which is more specifically related to "Religious Fundamentalist pressure," 13% of all who responded to the item agreed that they had experienced such pressure "(from clients, students, teachers, or administrators) to change my behavior." When the results are broken down by position held, some difference occurred in the sample: 14% of practitioners and 15% of administrators, but only 9% of educators agreed to the statement. These differences, however, are again not statistically significant (as measured by chi square, with alpha = .05). Differences in reported pressure by religious fundamentalists by specific religious orientations were small (and also nonsignificant).

Results on Other Specific Issues/Attitudes

As noted earlier, details of simple frequency counts on all items are presented in Appendix A, but many of these require discussion and, in some cases, crossing with other variables suggest interesting differences in subpopulations.

Abortion and related issues are considered crucial by Christian fundamentalists, and such issues are a possible source of conflict for social workers. A substantial majority of respondents (80%) did not find abortion to be "morally unacceptable" (item #2), with only 18% agreeing with the New Right position. An even larger majority (88%) agreed that a social work client is entitled to information on abortion (item #7). For the sample, educators were the most likely to agree (22% did) with the idea that abortion is morally unacceptable, with 14% of the practitioners agreeing and 21% of the administrators doing so. Such differences are large enough to be statistically significant (chi square = 8.3; exact probability of chi square is 0.016).

For both items, religious orientation did make a significant difference (statistically and substantively), although the differences were more pronounced for item #2. As might be expected, the religious group most likely to find abortion morally unacceptable was the Catholics (73%). Of the Protestants, 15% agreed with the statement, with smaller percentages in other religious groups. (Those few respondents who identified themselves as fundamentalists were far more likely to find abortion morally unacceptable than were nonfundamentalists--66% agreed with the item). Among all groups substantial majorities accepted the idea, as expressed in item #7, that a client is entitled to abortion information (64% of Catholics; 95% of Protestants; 93% of all respondents; 74% of fundamentalists).

An area somewhat related to the abortion issue is whether a parent/guardian should be informed if a minor child is seeking birth control

information and requests confidentiality. Most respondents (82%) disagreed that such notification is necessary, while a fairly high number (6%) found the statement ambiguous (comments included "depends on how young the minor is") or omitted the item. Among those agreeing (12%) were at least one or two who added comments such as "after careful counselling with the minor." Among occupational groups, in this sample, educators were the least supportive of confidentiality (15% of those expressing an opinion agreed that parents should be informed), with only 12% of the practitioners and 14% of the administrators agreeing (the differences are not, however, statistically significant.) Majorities of at least 80% of each religious group supported maintaining confidentiality.

The general area where the positions of the New Right got the least agreement from these social work professionals was in the area of women's rights. Large majorities supported passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (item #5)--90%--and the idea that a woman should have "the same rights in a family as a man" (item #3)--98%. All three occupational groups gave at least 85% support to both statements, with no significant differences among the groups.

While many of the complex issues related to sexual preferences and homosexuality were not addressed by this research, one item was included to permit at least a rough measure of attitudes in this area. The results seem to suggest pretty clearly that most social work professionals are unwilling to condemn totally homosexuality (in the same flat, unyielding way that the New Right has). A substantial majority (82%) of respondents disagreed with the idea, expressed in item #4, that homosexuality should be discouraged in

social work clients, and another 6% omitted it or found it ambiguous. There were only very slight differences in response to this item among the three occupational groups.

Prayer and religiosity, whether in public schools or with clients, were the subjects of several items, as were respect for religious beliefs of others. Item #8, regarding support for "school-sponsored prayer in public schools" was included primarily as a measure of support for an agenda item much emphasized by the New Right, and apparently supported by the American public in general ("School Prayer...," 1985), rather than as an issue of specific importance to social work. If it is interpreted in that way, the New Right did get support from some of these social work professionals (though far less than from the general U.S. public), with 18% agreeing with the idea. This varied significantly (chi square = 6.5; exact probability = .038) by occupation, with 22% of the administrators, 15% of the practitioners, and 19% of the educators supporting school-sponsored prayer.

An index of New Right fundamentalist positions was constructed by summing responses to eleven of the Likert format items. Items used were numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, and 20--see Appendix A for wording on the items. (Scoring on the items was first recoded so that agreement with the New Right position yielded a +1 for "agree," +2 for "strongly agree," -1 for "disagree," and -2 for "strongly disagree." Cases with missing values on any item were scored as missing on the index.) An individual's score on this index could range from +22 (strong agreement with the New Right position in every case) to -22 (strong disagreement in every

case). A large majority (94%) of all respondents scored negatively on this index, with a mean score of -13.6 and a median score of -15.0. The highest agreement with the New Right was a +20, scored by only one respondent, with 60 respondents scoring -22, maximum disagreement (this was, in fact, the modal score). Disagreement with the New Right positions among social work professionals is apparently so strong that even those few (33) who consider themselves fundamentalists, scored, on average, negatively on this index. (The average score for the 24 "Fundamentalists" who had a score was -3.6; this is substantially, and significantly, more positive than the -14.0 average among the 646 nonfundamentalists.)

Differences on the New Right index by occupation were not pronounced, although they were statistically significant (as measured by analysis of variance: F=3.3, with 2 and 634 degrees of freedom; exact probability of F under the null = .039). Administrators had the least negative score (mean = -12.7), with practitioners having the most disagreement (mean = -14.3), and educators in between (mean = -13.6). When religious preference is controlled for, however, the effect of occupation is no longer significant. Religious preference accounts for about 31% of the variance in the index (as measured by R^2).

As a comprehensive way of measuring how different social work educators are from social worker practitioners and administrators, a linear combination of measures of opinions and demographic variables was analyzed using discriminant analysis techniques. Opinion items were scored either 1 (for either level of agreement) or 0 (for either level of disagreement)

for this analysis. Other variables available for possible inclusion in the analysis were sex, membership in an organized religious body, and whether respondent considered himself a "Fundamentalist" (these were recorded as dummy variables--0 or 1--for this analysis); experience (with responses recoded to midpoints of intervals to approximate a ratio level measure); and religiosity. A stepwise procedure was used, with the variables that entered the analysis shown in Table 4

Table 4

Summary Table, Discriminant Analysis

Step	Variable Entered	Wilks' Lambda	Significance
1	Sex	.95	.000
2	Item #12	.94	.000
3	Item # 6	.93	.000
4	Experience	.89	.000
5	Item #19	.88	.000
6	Item #18	.87	.000

As can be seen from Table 4, the single variable of those analyzed which most efficiently predicts the occupation of a social work professional is sex, because of the difference among the three groups in percentage of women in the group. Controlling for sex, the second best discriminator is differences in opinion in regard to the importance of respecting the religious beliefs of clients (educators were the only group where any of these respondents

disagreed about the importance of such respect--possibly seeing the issue as more complex than the others did). The third discriminator to enter was item #6, which measured whether respondents reported pressure from "Religious Fundamentalists." As discussed above, educators in this sample were less likely to report such pressure. The fourth variable entered was amount of experience--and the only surprise is probably that the variable did not enter earlier. The final two steps (maximum number of steps was set, arbitrarily, at six) brought in the two items dealing with conflicts between a respondent's religious beliefs and institutional policies or the NASW's code of ethics (items #19 and #18, respectively). The resulting two functions do permit some discrimination between educators and practitioners: 42% of the 694 respondents who fall into one of the three occupational categories (and who did not have missing values on the discriminating variables) were correctly classified when the functions are applied to data on the respondents.

Comments from Respondents

There was apparently a great deal of interest in the issues measured by this research among professional social workers (educators and practitioners), with nearly 75% of those sampled completing a questionnaire, and with over 50% of those adding comments.

Fifty-six percent of the social work educators accepted, some with apparent enthusiasm, the invitation to add personal comments. These comments were found not only in a designated section at the end of the questionnaire but also in the margins, and in some cases on separate sheets

of paper conspicuously attached to the questionnaire. Here then was an additional opportunity to examine the ideas and feelings some social work educators had about their profession and contemporary political and religious themes. And some took the opportunity to comment on this study. (Selected representative comments appear in Appendix B.)

Many of the comments emphasized the difficulty of responding to the questions in the questionnaire in a simple way. Interestingly, the educators seemed to suggest that many human situations which social workers deal with require, if not demand, the opportunity for situation-by-situation analysis. None mentioned, however, whether s/he teaches situational ethics as part of professional education. No comments were recorded that suggested academic freedom was abrogated by any (or undue) influence by any policy, person or action of New Right fundamentalists. There was the sense that these educators feel very strongly about the professionalization of social work. For some, this meant that social work can only exist in an environment where nothing intrudes on the social worker's complete dedication to client self-determination, free of any doctrinal influence. But most comments give the impression that there is the overwhelming belief that individual religious, political and social values are an inherent part of life and must not be ignored either in the process of education or problem-solving. There is the sense that people gain strength and are not intruded upon by what they believe in and how they think, no matter how conservative or liberal those beliefs may be.

Recognition must be given to those educators who took exception to this study as a legitimate (or adequate) piece of research. The question can be

asked whether the sense of emotion felt from these few comments was engendered by the research methodology or by the theme of the research. A review of all comments, no matter where they were written on the questionnaire, leaves the impression that those professional educators who participated in this study are generally content to continue to practice or teach, and are not sure that New Right fundamentalism is much cause for concern to social work.

Significance and Implications for Higher Education

The political issues embraced by New Right fundamentalists in the U.S. call into question some of the most basic values in higher education. This is especially true in at least one professional field--social work. The work of educators committed to transmitting basic values to future practitioners could be substantially affected by New Right fundamentalists and those in sympathy with them. The place of religious and political values (and the interaction of the two) in a professional field, including effects on practice, policy, and education, is plainly worthy of further investigation and discussion.

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APPENDIX A

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(This is similar to questionnaire, but with raw frequencies shown)

SOCIAL WORK AND RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL VALUES

For each of these statements, please **circle** the symbol on the right side of the page which **best** represents your level of agreement with the statement (**SA** = Strongly Agree, **A** = Agree, **D** = Disagree, **SD** = Strongly Disagree). If you have no opinion on the statement or if it seems ambiguous, please circle the number of the statement (any comments on it will be appreciated). Remember that you **cannot** be identified from this form, so answer freely.

	SA	A	D	SD	"Ambig."	"Omitted
1. Social work clients **should** be served/treated the same way regardless of their religious beliefs.	735	97	45	17	24	16
2. Abortion is morally **unacceptable**.	82	82	253	495	13	8
3. A woman **should** have the same rights in a family as a man.	708	182	14	7	11	12
4. Homosexuality in social work clients **should** be discouraged.	28	81	392	374	42	17
5. The Equal Rights Amendment **should** be passed.	537	276	67	21	15	18
6. In my activities related to social work (education or practice), I **have** had Religious Fundamentalist pressure (from clients, students, teachers, or administrators) to change my behavior.	23	94	307	481	17	12
7. If a social work client wants an abortion, she **should** be advised where and how she can get one.	477	348	48	19	29	13
8. I **favor** school-sponsored prayer in public schools.	50	110	286	454	21	13
9. I am **less** sure that social work can be helpful to clients and society than I was when I first started working in the social work field.	45	231	310	330	7	11
10. Social workers **should** encourage clients to pray.	22	87	336	411	65	13
11. Social workers **should** encourage clients to be religious.	20	108	355	369	64	18
12. A social worker **should** always respect the religious beliefs (or lack of them) of social work clients.	691	225	4	1	5	8
13. A social worker **should** always respect the religious beliefs (or lack of them) of professional colleagues.	638	274	6	1	7	8
14. A social worker educator **should** always respect the religious beliefs (or lack of them) of social work students.	623	281	9	1	9	11
15. Social workers **should not** pray with their clients.	317	280	203	49	73	12
16. Religious belief **is** a necessary prerequisite to conscientious professional behavior.	26	84	377	418	19	10
17. As a social worker I **have** had problems with clients which were related to differences in religious belief between me and the client.	17	101	416	379	1	9
18. If my religious beliefs conflicted with part of the National Association of Social Workers code of ethics, I **would refuse** to follow that part of the code of ethics.	100	291	241	154	120	27
19. If my religious beliefs conflicted with my institution's (agency's or college's) policies, I **would refuse** to follow those policies.	101	309	264	112	121	27
20. A social worker **should** inform a parent/guardian if a minor child is seeking birth control information, even if the child requests confidentiality.	26	85	428	337	44	14

For the following, please check only one blank for each item:

(Missing/Ambiguous)

How long have you been a professional social worker and/or social work educator?
2 Less than 5 yrs. 3 5 to 10 yrs. 36 Over 10, up to 15 yrs. 190 Over 15, up to 20 yrs. 698 Over 20 yrs.
(5)

Which of the following **best** describes your current (or, if retired/unemployed, most recent) **primary** position?
411 Social Work **Practitioner** 359 Social Work **Administrator** 110 Social Work **Educator** 54 Other

Which of the following **best** describes your current (or most recent) **primary** employer (agency or college)?
416 Public 118 Private/religious affiliated 245 Private/nonreligious 126 Private practice 29 Other

Which are you ? 550 Female 375 Male (9)

What is your marital status? 580 Married 157 Never Married 97 Divorced 12 Separated 79 Widowed (9)

Which **age** category are you in? 0 Under 30 6 30 to 39 238 40 to 49 294 50 to 59 391 60 or over (5)

Which **best** describes your race/ethnic group? 48 Black 830 White 26 Hispanic 30 Other/Missing

Which income category **best** describes your family's (including yours,spouse's, etc.) **total** annual income?
15 Under $15,000 140 $15,000 to $29,999 365 $30,000 to $50,000 372 Over $50,000 (42)

Which income category **best** describes your personal annual income **only** from social work (fees, pay, retirement)?
186 Under $15,000 269 $15,000 to $29,999 357 $30,000 to $50,000 99 Over $50,000 (23)

Which of the following political orientation labels **best** describes your own orientation?
99 Very liberal 439 Liberal 327 Moderate 51 Conservative 5 Very conservative (13)

Which of the following religious labels **best** describes your own general religious orientation?
120 Catholic 193 Jewish 429 Protestant 83 Agnostic 37 Atheist 72 Other/Missing

Do you consider yourself a **Fundamentalist**? 33 Yes 886 No (15)

Are you currently affiliated with an organized religious body? 541 Yes 380 No (13)

Which of the following **best** describes your religious orientation (or nonreligious status)(Please choose **one**)?
269 **Central** to my life and philosophy
229 One of the several **most important** things in my life
206 **Important**, but less so than other things (14)
164 **Fairly unimportant** in my life and thinking
52 Of **no importance** to me

What US State (or foreign country) do you **work** in? **(Replies from DC & every state but Montana & Nevada)**

Which **best** describes the type of area you **work** in? 44 Rural 109 Suburb 161 Town 569 Large City (51)

Check the highest degree you have earned (if now working on a higher degree, please also **circle** that degree):
6 Associate 17 Bachelor's 811 Master's 95 Doctorate **(missing:5 ; frequencies shown are earned)**

Please add any comments, here or on additional paper, on how religious and political values have affected your work (and vice versa), on conflicts between social work and religious values you may have observed, and on any of the questions above. Please mail this as soon as possible in the enclosed, postpaid, preaddressed envelope. Thanks very much for your help.

(A wide and very interesting range of comments were received--with over half the respondents adding at least comments in the margins, and with some adding long attached pages. See body of paper for discussion and Appendix B for some examples.)

APPENDIX B

Comments

1) This questionnaire is non-definitive, illusive, and non-professional in terms of a non-bias approach. The questionnaire is too generic, argumentative and illusive to produce any data which is useful other than simply tabulation which when tabulated could say nothing-no hostility intended-simply a challenge to "so-called" research.

2) Religious values have been central in my value orientation. I see social work as the profession through which I can express and live out my central purpose in life which is to serve less fortunate people.

3) Political values are central to my work, if you define political broadly, social work as expressed in the NASW code does conflict with fundamentalist values, as do the CSWE accreditation standards on women and diversity.

4) On two occasions, I have refused to accept jobs because certain political or religious positions were implied as necessary to follow.

5) Religiously, I believe that every human being has the spirit of God (of creation) within us, but we need to become aware of it and develop it-by the use of intuition and creative imagination, sometimes called prayer. I was reared a Christian.

6) I am a Catholic sister concerned with services to the poor, the oppressed, the alienated, the peace movements. I am active with a "sanctuary project" and more or less against violence in interventions to improve the "fates" of people.

7) Even atheism is a religious belief. Some beliefs may conflict with professional behavior, though very conscientious. The agency or college should be informed of the conflict between belief and policy, recognizing that this would lead to separation if not accommodation.

8) See Social Work Code of Ethics: Personal philosophy and beliefs are not to be conveyed to clienteles. Social Work profession promotes right of self determination for all. Please leave it there.

9) I definitely feel that influences are subtle or hidden rather than obvious. I know I was personally discriminated against "subtly," because of being a female and Jewish for promotions, etc. in the face of excellent evaluations, consistently, by some superiors who were of a different religious background (although other reasons were given which were unrealistic). This is not paranoid.

10) I respect almost all religious values and think they are important sources of strength for clients and generally should be supported. I urge clients and students to participate in the political process as a way of enhancing mastery over their own lives.

11) I feel that some colleagues in my agency are intolerant to others who do not believe as they do especially in areas of abortion.

12) Religious and political values are very much a part of my consciousness as a social worker. I am therefore, very aware of their role in the lives of my clients. Their role in conflict for me as a worker is not a vantage point I can easily identify.

13) My philosophy is that social work is religion in action. I personally would have difficulty in social work without my faith. I may ask for guidance on most decisions in social work-you may quote me.

14) Conflict between social work and funadmentalist religious values, yes, but not between social work and most mainstream religious values.

15) I deeply resent the cooptation of the word Christian as an adjective to describe religiously fundamental social work.

16) Conflicts that have affected my work and that of my students have been more in the area of a community's failure to make services (e.g. family planning and day care) available and of legislative action restricting confidentiality in work with teenagers, runaways, juvenile delinquents, etc.

17) It would be easy to answer several of your questions "Depends on circumstances." Especially-questions around individual religions. I oppose religions which are against our government, for example, so my answers did not include such beliefs when responding to your questions.

18) The questions demand a black or white answer. There is no provision for circumstantial ethics or conditions affecting behavior and options.

19) I believe in strict separation of church and state. I believe there is a spiritual side to life; everyone should be able to express in his own way-not necessarily through a church.